COL. COLL.
LIBRARY
N. YORK

THE AERONAUT.

No. 38. June 10, 1817.

Omnibus hoc vitium est.
HOR.

All have this fault.

Few things have a greater tendency to prevent the improvement of the mind than the habit of using common place sentiments. This is a fault of which most men are somewhat guilty; a fault which they imbibe from their Education & which grows upon them involuntarily till it becomes almost a second nature so firmly fixed

as never to be eradicated. Set prizes are not aimed when confined to certain little subjects which do not admit of any great diversity of opinion but we would wish them to be kept to their proper subjects we would never permit them to travel into those of a higher order where there is room for the exertion of intellect and for the formation of original combinations. Some men may not be able to avoid the practice of common place and such undoubtedly must be the case with those whose minds are narrow or

whose opportunities have not furnished them to converse with objects calculated to brighten the fancy or improve the understanding. but they who have received the advantages of. Education who have mingled with the World and are conversant with the Works of. nature have no such excuse to offer and can plead only the power of. habit and the customs of. men. it is time for us to break through these habits It is time for us to establish new customs this is an age of. Enterprise why not when men devote themselves so much to the arts endeavour to excite new exertions of. intellect why

not polish our minds nine from mental improvement its we are to derive whatever is valuable in humanknowledge - Common place prevents the enfeebleness of thought and weakens all attempts at original combinations in its use genius and dullness advance with equal steps for while it restrains the bold flight of the one it arrests the lazy progress of the other the fine sensibilities of genius are shocked by the repetition of well worn sentiments it would fly to the discussion with full ardor and careless of what has been said or written upon the subject would think choose and decide for itself but dullness is entrenched at every

point if it cannot form ideas of its own it can suggest those of others it can wander about it and about it till we are driven out of the field through mere weariness with such stupidity - yet dullness sometimes assumes respectable appearances some opinions with out like wisdom and you may be deceived for a moment into a belief of some originality but you soon discover the hollow foundations upon which this show is erected you discover that it has learnt its lesson by rote and you easily discomfit so unworthy an antagonist In conversation we commonly meet with this

evil we suffer a confined restraint from its prevalency and dare but seldom to venture upon untrodden ground lest we be stopped in our course by some idea which has so often been suggested as to cause at once disgust and impatience in our sex we are often hampered by some indelicate expression would you describe the wonders of nature its beauties and bring by words the images you represent in all their glowing tints to the mind you are perhaps interrupted by some information of a produce of the soil better suited to the apetite than your description to the imagination;- how can

we say much for amor of the spirit of conversation amongst the fair if they have not taken indelicate common place they have their useful indolence & thoughtnature has endowed them highly with charms of mind we seldom perceive much in them beyond the charms of person. they bend all their accomplishments to one object the power to please and they seek rather how far their follies may be extended without incurring public animadversion than how much good sense and superior cultivation may raise them in our opinion. but weakness is a frail weapon

and though it may sometimes conquer it is even in danger of being destroyed

The common place in writing is even more irksome than in conversation. we retire to our books with the just expectation of being pleased & instructed that one has written and published seems to be a promise that he has thought & reflected. that he has examined every principle discussed every question and suffered nothing to pass which were not been the test of criticism and certainly if ever we speak we ought carefully to weigh the arguments we are about to use

ever we write we should have recourse to a tenfold precaution that nothing light or frivolous should escape us. words produce but a momentary sensation they are received carelessly and their influence is after soon to be done away but that which is written might last for ages it may if badly done bring down disgrace upon our heads if well performed it may procure us a lasting brilliant glorious fame - few Authors have however the patience to tie themselves down to rigorous rules A good style seems sufficient to hide a barrenness of ideas and even those writers who think best have often a reminence of this fault

We do not expect we do not therefore ask perfection but we wish to see banished whatever is base and common we are unwilling to tolerate little faults as well as great ones since the former must be the effect of negligence. If what one has to communicate be already well-known why speak or write at all upon the subject - be satisfied that silence will produce more honour than a foolish dialogue - common place has an invariable tendency to equalize the minds of different men who mingle much with one another - in large assemblies men of sense attract but little attention while the lively fop who has learned by heart attracts uni

veral admiration Without down with Democracy we condemn that spirit which would make all Mankind in every respect equal. and yet when we submit their minds to the superior intellect we hold the gifts of Fortune by an uncertainty but no one can rob us of our mental powers and we cannot complain of the Tenure by which we hold this pleasure while it adds to their strength it yields a reciprocal return of gratification

From whence does this habit of common place arise? is it owing to any defect in our minds or is it caused by indolence? we are rather inclined to ascribe it to the latter were it caused by native

defects it would exist in some but not in the generality of men that it was a common fault prove it to arise from some defect in our education the more we mingle with society the less occasion do we find for the exercise of intellect we discover that but a scanty subsidy of ideas are necessary for the performance of our feats and that we may make a decent figure without drawing much upon the resources of our own minds we are not disheartened by our barrenness, because there are but few who excite our emulation by rising in the contest to not who shall be best

informed but who shall make him lively nothing more agreeable in his table talk in the higher conversations & he most helpful in banishing thought and reflection from the brow. not being aware of the pleasures of thought. they cannot understand that there are such pleasures and their dark minds are shut out from participating in the researches of [illegible] and from the acquisition of knowledge why is it that men are thus indifferent in the cultivation of their mental powers. why do they sacrifice every thing to sensual gratifications why leave

the field which presents a rich harvest of the choicest fruits to the care barren & cold in a sterile soil. Thus in connected is Man in his eagerness of his pursuits he sacrifices solid advantages to trifling benefits thought less of the future he prefers the present moment as if in it were concentered all the happiness of life regardless of the fact he is not taught by the lessons of experience to irresolute that like the Weathercock he changes his position with every wind that blows the youthful he miss wilder the pursuit of pleasure in old age he regrets over the wreck his follies

have occasioned even confident in hope and cordially deceived in his expectations. he obtains a bauble hope soon destroys its interest and he throws it down to obtain another success in any pursuit at once destroys its charms the anxiety of the chase gives employment to the mind & while pursuing any object we forget the tedium of existence but to conclude it is want of thought that occasions common place & it is common place in some shape or other that to adopt much of our unhappiness could we banish this could we learn to cultivate our minds could we think well ere we spoke or acted and suffer nothing

to escape which was defic-
ient in weight or goodness
the tone of society would
would brighten; the charac-
ter of Mankind would be
elevated life would gain
new charms conversation
new spirit Authors would
write with caution and
review with care & toget-
her with common sense
would vanish much
of the tasteless frivolity much
of the bad morals and
much of the unhappi-
ness of Men

W.